Mr. *Foxcroft's*

SERMON

At the

ORDINATION

Of a

DEACON.

55

BRITISH MUSEUM

The Divine Right of Deacons.

A

SERMON

PREACH'D

On Occasion of the

ORDINATION

OF

Mr. *Zechariah Thayer,*

To the Office of a *DEACON* in the Old or First gather'd Church in *Boston,*

LORD'S DAY, *May* 23. 1731.

By THOMAS FOXCROFT, M. A.
One of the Pastors of the said Church.

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DEACON.

1 Tim. iii. 10, & 13.

AND let these also first be proved; then let them use the Office of a Deacon, being found blameless.—— For they that have used the Office of a Deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the Faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

THIS Epistle may not unfitly be intitled *Paul's* CHARGE to *Timothy*. The professed design of it is to give him Instructions for a right Conduct in the Church of GOD. The Apostle seeing occasion to go into *Macedonia*, besought *Timothy* to abide still at *Ephesus*: to the end he might confirm the Souls of the Disciples, and establish them in the faith and order of the Gospel; preserve the purity of Christian Doctrine and Worship in the Church there, and propagate it in places round about.

For

For the ſame Cauſe doubtleſs left he *Timothy* at *Epheſus*, as *Titus* at *Crete*; that he might *ſet in order the things which were wanting*, fill up the ſeveral Offices of Chriſt's appointment with Perſons duly qualify'd for the execution of them, and ſettle things referring to Divine Worſhip, Government and Diſcipline in the Houſe of God, in a juſt conformity to the Rule of Chriſt's revealed Will.

In the Chapter before us we have the *two Orders* of publick Officers, Biſhops and Deacons, treated of. The Apoſtle commends them, ſaying, *He that deſires the Office of a Biſhop, deſires a good Work*; and *they that have uſed the Office of a Deacon well, purchaſe to themſelves a good degree.* ---- He alſo gives the diſtinct Qualifications for theſe Offices, in order to direct the Choice of proper Perſons for the Adminiſtration of them. He firſt lays down the neceſſary Properties of a Biſhop or Paſtor, from *ver.* 2, to 7. And then draws the Deacons Character, *ver.* 8, and onwards. *Likewiſe muſt the Deacons be grave, not double-tongued*, &c. --- He wou'd have Candidates *try'd* by theſe Rules, and being approv'd, wou'd have them *uſe the Office*, ver. 10. ---- And in *ver.* 13. he encourages both *Timothy* to ordain meet Perſons unto, and ſuch to accept of, the Office of a Deacon, from this Conſideration, that they who *uſe it well*, do *purchaſe to themſelves a good degree, and great boldneſs in the Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus.*

What is neceſſary for the Explanation of the Words, may be offer'd in ſpeaking to theſe Obſervations from them, which are to be the Arguments of the following Diſcourſe.

1. The Service of *Deacons* in the Church of Chriſt is a *ſtanding Office*, belonging to a *diſtinct Order* of Men.

2. Perſons are to be firſt *proved*, and then to uſe this Office, being found *blameleſs*.

3. The Conſideration, that ſuch as uſe the Office of a Deacon *well*, do *purchaſe to themſelves a good degree*, and great boldneſs in the Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus, affords encouragement both to the *Calling* and *Ordaining* of meet Perſons unto this Office, and their *engaging* in it.

Theſe Propoſitions lie plainly in the Text, or are very fairly deduced from it.

Doct.

Doct. I. *The Service of* Deacons *in the Church of Christ is a* ſtanding *Office, belonging to a* diſtinct *Order of Men*: or thus, Deacons are a diſtinct Order of Eccleſiaſtical Officers, ſeparated to a ſpecial Miniſtration, and appointed by Chriſt to continue in his Church thro' all Ages.

The Proſecution of this Point will open to your View the principal *Grounds* of the Sacred Tranſaction before us this Day: ſome Account of which I apprehend it neceſſary to preface this Solemnity with; as our Practice in the Ordination of Deacons is become now almoſt ſingular, and as an Account of ſuch publick Actions ſeems a Debt juſtly owing to God and our Neighbours.

Here let it be obſerv'd,

1. 'Tis not to be diſputed but that *there was ſuch an Office*, as this of Deacons, *inſtituted* and *receiv'd* in the *firſt* days of the Goſpel.

By *Office*, I mean a ſpecial Calling, appropriate to a particular Order of Men, and not common to other Members of the Community.

By *Deacons*, I mean thoſe Eccleſiaſtical Officers, who have the Care of the publick Stock for pious & charitable Uſes committed to them. Indeed the Word Διάκονοι I acknowledge, literally Signifies no more than *Miniſters* or *Servants*, and is often us'd according to its general and primary meaning †. However the word is not always us'd in that Latitude; but manifeſtly ſometimes with Reſtriction, for a particular kind of Officer in the Church of Chriſt. As Ἐπίσκοπος admits a reſtrain'd, as well as large Senſe; literally and firſtly meaning any *Overſeer*, but yet ſometimes intending a particular Church Officer: So the Word Διάκονος, tho' it ſtrictly ſignifies any Miniſter or Servant, yet has a limited ſenſe, and is in its Eccleſiaſtical Application generally the name of a particular Officer in the Church, whoſe ſpecial buſineſs is to receive and diſtribute what is offer'd from time to time by the Church for works of Piety and Charity. The word in our Text is judged by all Expoſitors to be a Title of Office; and that particular ſort of Officer, juſt now deſcrib'd, the generality judge is thereby denoted.

† *Matth.* 22.13. 1 *Cor.* 3 5. *Rom* 13 4 *Heb.*1.14. *Rom* 15 8.

Moſt

Moſt evident it is that there was ſuch a kind of Officer of Divine Appointment. We have an Account of the Inſtitution of the Officer, we judge denoted by the Term or Name of Deacon, in the 6th *Chap.* of *Acts*; where we may ſee the Occaſion of their Appointment, and the Scope of their Calling, which was to *ſerve Tables*, διακονεῖν τραπέζαις, to be Deacons to Tables, as one expreſſes it.

We are told here, there aroſe a Murmuring among the *Helleniſtical* Jews, that their Widows (under which are comprehended the Fatherleſs and Poor) were not ſo well attended and provided for, as the Poor of the native *Hebrews*, in the *daily Miniſtration.* To explain this we muſt note, the Church at *Jeruſalem* had by a common Agreement made a publick Fund or Stock, which was to ſupply every one's daily occaſions; and eſpecially the Miniſters of the Word and the indigent Members of the Church were to have their Maintenance out of it. See *Act.* 2. 44, 45. and *chap.* 4. 34, ----37.

The Apoſtles for a while took the care of the Church-Stock, and ſuperintended the daily Miniſtration to the Saints. They had opportunity for this, ſince at firſt they made *Jeruſalem* the place of their uſual Reſidence: Antiquity (if I remember right) ſays, they did ſo for about 12 Years. And being Perſons of an eſtabliſh'd Reputation, as well as ſuperiour Dignity by their excelling Accompliſhments, and ſo peculiarly worthy of Truſt and Confidence; the Diſciples, when they brought the Prices of their Goods and Poſſeſſions ſold, in order to have all things in common, thought fit to lay them down at the Apoſtles Feet: doubtleſs (as in another Caſe, 2 *Cor.* 8. 4.) *Praying them with much Intreaty, that they wou'd receive the Gifts* into their Diſpoſition, *and take upon them the Fellowſhip of the Miniſtring to the Saints.*

Accordingly the Apoſtles ſubmitted to take the Charge of this Fund for the preſent, receiving and paying out the Monies collected; and perhaps the Diſtribution might at firſt be perſonally perform'd by them: but the number of Diſciples increaſing, and ſo Cares multiplying on the Apoſtles hands, 'tis likely they took in the Aſſiſtance of others (and thoſe probably ſuch as were call'd by way of diſtinction *Hebrews*, being Natives of *Judea*, and ſo

migh

might be under a Temptation to Partiality) who by general Orders from them help'd to manage this Affair. And upon occaſion of ſome imprudent unequal Conduct, either real or ſuppoſed, there aroſe among the *Helleniſtical* Diſciples a Complaint that their Widows or Poor were neglected in the daily Miniſtration. --- It's too commonly the fault of poor People to imagine they are ſlighted; and inſtead of being thankful for what is given them by charitable Perſons, they often grow querulous, and murmur that *more* is not given. And where any lie under ſome peculiar Diſadvantages, as the *Helleniſts* did in Compare with the *Native Jews*, they are apt to be jealous, in caſe of general Diſtributions, that Things are manag'd with Partiality, and a criminal Reſpect of Perſons; when really there is no juſt foundation for any ſuch Cenſures. --- Or, if the Apoſtles employ'd any of the *Hebrews* under them, theſe might be really faulty in not giving a due Proportion of Supplies to the *Grecian* Widows. For tho' in Chriſt Jeſus there be neither *Jew* nor *Greek*; no Diſtinction of *Hebrew* or *Helleniſt*: Yet it ſeems they that were united in the Chriſtian Profeſſion, had not quite laid aſide their former Prejudices, but ſtill retain'd ſomething of the old Leven. There were mutual Envyings and Jealouſies ſtill ſubſiſting among them: and their firſt Contention was about a Money-matter.

Now upon conſideration of theſe Difficulties, the Apoſtles were diſpos'd to excuſe themſelves from any further attendance to the charitable Miniſtration: and being directed thereto by the Holy Ghoſt, as we cannot doubt, ſince in all Affairs of Importance to the Kingdom of Chriſt, the Apoſtles acted under a Divine Inſpiration, they mov'd it to the Church, That a Select Number of the Brethren ſhould be appointed on purpoſe to look after the diſtribution of the Church's Money. --- *ver.* 2, 3, & 4. It follows, *ver.* 5, & 6. *And the Saying pleaſed the whole Multitude*, both Jews & Greeks; *and they choſe Seven Men; whom they ſet before the Apoſtles, and when they had pray'd, they laid their Hands upon them*, Ordaining them Stewards and Diſpenſers of the collected Charities.

Under a Divine direction they did this; as *Moſes* in a ſomewhat like caſe, appointed inferiour Officers in the

Jewiſh Common-Wealth, *Deut.* 1. Upon which one obſerves, "*Moſes* had no Regal or Arbitrary Authority at "all: but was only God's Secretary, to write his Mind; "and God's Inſtrument, to publiſh & execute his Laws". And look, what *Moſes* was to the *Jews*, that were the *Apoſtles* unto the Chriſtian Church, the Revealers and Interpreters of God's Law, and God's Vice-gerents, who in his Name and according to his Will, ſettled the Eccleſiaſtical Polity under the Goſpel-Diſpenſation. Hence, doubtleſs they might uſe that Form of Expreſſion in this, as in other Cases, *It ſeemeth good to the* Holy Ghost, as well as *to us*.

Now we have reaſon to look on what they did upon this Occaſion, as the Inſtituting and eſtabliſhing of a diſtinct publick Office in the Chriſtian Church.

It's plain, the Attending upon *Tables* was now made a ſpecial Miniſtry in the Church; an Office divided from that of Teachers. For the Apoſtles ſecluded themſelves from that Service, and procur'd others to be devoted to that particular Charge: And their whole Management and Language upon this Occaſion were ſuch as imported the Specification of a Calling peculiar and diſtinct from the other Officers and Members. *Ver.* 2, 3, 4. *It is not Reaſon, that we ſhould leave the Word of GOD, and ſerve Tables. Wherefore look ye out among you ſeven Men, whom we may appoint over this Buſineſs. But we will give ourſelves continually to Prayer and to the Miniſtry of the Word.* The ſerving of Tables is here manifeſtly ſeparated from the Office of Teachers, and made a particular Miniſtry in the Church, the diſcretive and proper Charge of Deacons. Hence the Apoſtle *Paul*, in his Writings, ſeveral times mentions *Deacons*, as Officers diſtinguiſh'd from Biſhops or Teachers. "That "it is a diſtinct publick Office (ſays one of our vene-"rable Divines †) is apparent, becauſe the Seven were "elected in a ſolemn manner thereto, and receiv'd a "ſolemn Inſtitution from the Apoſtles, and ſo far from "Chriſt for the undertaking of that Service.

While the Apoſtles attended the Miniſtration to the Saints, they only did it in a way of *Charity*: Whereas the

† *Hooker*, Survey, Part 2. *pag.* 34.

Perſons

Perſons afterwards *appointed over this Buſineſs*, were to do it in a way of *Office*, as a Work particularly theirs by a Divine Aſſignment.

The Deaconſhip from this time became an appropriate Office, & was no more left at large, or impos'd on Teachers of the Word: Tho' indeed upon ſome ſpecial Occaſions the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts, as they travel'd from place to place, we find carrying extraordinary Charities.

We may obſerve here,

It ſeems to have been but *fitting*, that ſuch an Office ſhould be appointed, and lodg'd in the Hands of a ſpecial Order of Men. 'Twas requiſite, in the nature of things, that the ſerving of Tables ſhould be made a particular Truſt, and aſſign'd to certain Selected Perſons. For if it lay in Common, it would be ſeen, that what is every Man's Work would be often neglected, as no Body's Concern. And 'twas already found by Experience inconvenient for Teachers of the Word to ſuſtain and manage this Truſt; as unavoidably inferring too great a Diverſion from their proper Employ, which is of a more ſpiritual and noble deſign, and expoſing them to the Cenſures of envious diſcontented People; and by Conſequence tending to hinder the Goſpel.

The Nature of the Deacons Truſt was ſuch as required ſome Gifts & Qualifications, that were not to be found in every one: And the Difficulties, Cares & Labours attending the faithful Diſcharge of it, ſuch as made it unſuitable for Teachers of the Word to be concerned therein. 'Twas a moſt wiſe and reaſonable thing then to commit this Office to ſome other Perſons, choſen by the Church, and approv'd by the Apoſtles, as meet for it.

And now, the inſpired *Apoſtles* concurring in the ſolemn Appointment of thoſe, whom the Church elected, unto the Buſineſs of miniſtring to the Saints, this (I ſay) ſpeaks the Office of Deacons to be as really the Inſtitution of Chriſt, as the Office of Teachers. It is not to be look'd on as owing to mere human Contrivance & Agreement, but as taking it's Riſe from the Inſtitution and revealed Will of Chriſt. Nor is it to be blended with the Miniſtry of the Word, but preſerv'd ſeparate; as having its own diſtinct Divine Original and Foundation.

I ſhall only add, in the Words of a Learned Man ‖ : "If Deacons were not inſtituted here by the Apoſtles, I "deſire to know when, where, and by whom they were "inſtituted; and what other Record we have left us of "the Inſtitution of them. Againſt this (ſays he) it is "objected, That theſe Seven are never called *Deacons* "in the whole Hiſtory of the *Acts* of the Apoſtles. "But (he anſwers) this objection can be of no ſtrength "againſt the Suffrage of all Antiquity, which hath ſtill "given them the Name of Deacons. He further ob-"ſerves, In the whole Book of the *Acts*, neither are "they ever call'd *Miniſters of Tables*, tho' here they are "ſaid to be appointed for that Work".

Enough, I think, has been offer'd to clear the Divine Right of the Deacons Office, and to prove it ſeparate from that of Teachers, according to the expreſs Intent of it's primitive Inſtitution.

We paſs now to ſhew,

2. It was deſign'd to be a *ſtanding* Office, and the Inſtitution is of *laſting*, *univerſal* Obligation to the Churches of Chriſt.

It's very manifeſt, the Apoſtles inſtituted this Office with a view to the Benefit of all the Churches, and intended it for a perpetual Duration. The original Inſtitution neither limited it in regard of Place, nor Time. This is generally acknowledg'd by all Parties: yet, becauſe there are ſome Objectors, I will a little labour the Confirmation of the Point; and ſhew,

1. In regard of *Place*, 'twas beſure not limited to the Church of *Jeruſalem*.

Indeed on immediate Reaſon of the Inſtitution of the Deacons Office was a particular Occaſion riſing in the Church there: And we don't read of the ſame Reaſon for that Office elſewhere; I mean, a Community of Goods, and daily Miniſtration. But yet it's Fact that elſewhere we find the ſame Office ſet up, in one Church and another. The Apoſtle writing to the Church at *Philippi*, mentions in his Superſcription, *the Biſhops* and *Deacons*. It's manifeſt, the two Orders here men-

‖ *Whitby* on Act. 6.

tion'd

tion'd, intend Officers belonging to that Church and dwelling at *Philippi* †. So then, the Church there had Deacons, as well as Biſhops. This ſhews plainly, the Appointment of thoſe Perſons at *Jeruſalem* to ſerve Tables, was not a *Topical* thing, but deſign'd as *exemplary* and *obligatory* to other Churches.

We have the Conſent of all *Antiquity*, that the Deacons here ſpoken of, are that kind of Officers inſtituted in *Act.* 6. whoſe buſineſs was to ſerve Tables: And we have good *Reaſon* to judge, this particular kind of Officers is denoted by that Term in this place. As one obſerves *, "The Name, when appropriated to Officers "in the Chriſtian Church, does fully agree with the "Buſineſs and the firſt Occaſion of thoſe whom we un- "derſtand by it. And as the diſtributing the Church's "Charity was call'd by the Name Διακονία, and the "Seven were ſet over this Buſineſs, it ſeems that hence "came the Name of Διάκονοι to be us'd to ſignify ſuch "Officers".

Some Epiſcopal Writers indeed wou'd pretend the Deacons here ſpoken of, to be *Preſbyters* or Goſpel-Miniſters. —— But as Biſhops and Deacons are here mention'd together by way of Diſtinction, it's plain, the Deacons in this place intend thoſe Church-Officers who were inſtituted for the ſerving of Tables, and not the Miniſtry of the Word. For there are but theſe two ſtanding Orders, of Divine Inſtitution. The Opinion that makes theſe Deacons to be Goſpel-Miniſters or Teachers, is founded in another Miſtake, as if there were two Orders or unequal Ranks of Goſpel-Teachers, *Biſhops* and *Preſbyters*: But it labours of this unhappy Difficulty (which I know not how any can rationally ſalve) That they are able to produce a Divine Commiſſion for but *One only*; and by Conſequence the pretended Diſtinction and Imparity of Biſhops and Preſbyters muſt be exploded, as unſcriptural, if we wou'd manifeſt a ſincere Attachment to the Word of Chriſt, as our governing Rule in Matters Divine. Whereas, for Biſhops and *Deacons* according to *our* Notion and Application

† See this matter argu'd by Dr *Whitby* in his Notes on the Place. As alſo in *Sober Remarks*, Edit. 2. p. 91.

* *Pierce*, Letters, I. pag. 34.

of

of thoſe Terms, we are able to point out a diſtinct Inſtitution for each, in the holy Scriptures.

And here we find both Orders mention'd by the Apoſtle, together and by way of Diſtinction, as being in the Church at *Philippi*.

And now upon this I can't refrain obſerving, That I doubt not the Contenders for Prelacy wou'd have triumph'd in it, as an unanſwerable Argument in favour of their Opinion, had the Text run, [*with the Biſhops and* PRESBYTERS] and they wou'd have urg'd it as a moſt plauſible Support of the Diſtinction they put between them. But ſince the Paſſage ſtands otherwiſe, they have invented a forc'd Conſtruction of one of the Names (not to take any Notice of their Deſcants upon the other) and wou'd make *Deacons* intend *Preſbyters*, contrary to the generally receiv'd Notion of the Term, when us'd to ſignify a Church-Officer, and contrary to the evident Senſe of the Word as uſed by the ſame Apoſtle in his Epiſtle to *Timothy*; which any unbias'd Perſon muſt be convinc'd of, by this ſingle Conſideration, That the Deſcription there given of *Deacons* altogether omits one of the fundamental Articles in the Character of *Preſbyters*, viz. *An Aptneſs to teach*.

And Dr. *Hammond*, a celebrated Epiſcopal Annotator, is fully of opinion, that as by *Biſhops*, in the Scripture-uſe of the Word, are to be underſtood the Paſtors of particular Churches, ſo " by the *Deacons* are to be underſtood in this place, being joyn'd to *Biſhops*, thoſe that " attend on them in every Church, and were then *next* " *to them*; there being not then any *middle* ſort of " Church Officers * inſtituted betwixt the Biſhops and " them. And the ſame (ſays he) is certainly the Notion " of the Word, in that other place, 1 *Tim.* 3. 8, 12. " where the Rules are given for the qualifying them that " are ordained to that Office ".

This ſuggeſts a further Argument to eſtabliſh the Point we are upon, *viz.* That the Office inſtituted *Acts* 6. was not a thing *local* in its deſign, I mean, not intended to be confin'd to the Church at *Jeruſalem*: For *Timothy* was inſtructed in the Qualifications of Deacons, *to the ſame End*, that he was alſo in the Qualifications of Biſhops,

* Such as are now call'd *Preſbyters*, in the Church of *England*.

namely,

namely, for his Direction in the Appointment of such Officers in the Churches, wherever as an Evangelist he travel'd to set in order the things that were wanting.

Agreeably the Apostle writing to the *Corinthians*, takes Notice (1 Epist. Chap. 12.) That *God has set in his Church* HELPS: which Expression is generally understood to denote a particular kind of Officer, and is both by Episcopal and Presbyterian Writers apply'd to *Deacons*, as most naturally referring to them ||. These the Apostle tells us, GOD hath *set in his Church*.

Now upon the whole, let it be observ'd; If the Churches in a Variety of places had Deacons constituted in them by Apostolical Direction, it argues the Office was not under a Limitation (either actual or intentional) to the City of *Jerusalem*; altho' the Institution took place there first of all. And then if the Churches in general at that day, when reduc'd to a settled State and the Order, in which they were to continue, had Deacons appointed in them, this surely affords a strong presumtive Argument, that these Officers were design'd also for an unlimited Continuance in the Churches, as being of universal Advantage and perpetual Use. For the primitive Churches in an organized State, as at *Philippi*, at *Ephesus*, &c. were intended *Patterns*, for the Constitution, Government and Order of the Churches in all successive Generations.

But this leads me to the other Head. ——

2. In regard of *Time*, this Office of Deacons was not limited to the *Apostolical* Age.

As it was not topical, so neither temporal, in its first Design. To confirm this, a few Arguments may be distinctly offer'd. As

1. The primitive Institution has never been *repealed*: which is a Consideration, that I think sufficiently infers the perpetual Continuance of the Office.

The Scriptures, which were given by Inspiration of GOD, are our supreme Directory in Church-Affairs, and by them we are to learn and judge what Officers Christ

|| Dr *Whitby* on the place observes ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι, from whence comes the word render'd *Helps*, signifies to take care of others.

hath

hath ſet in his Church. The Sovereignty of the Lord Jeſus, as Head of the Church, is to be acknowledg'd by taking our Directions from his Word in all Eccleſiaſtical Concerns. 'Tis an unſufferable Encroachment on his Prerogative, to ſet up any Office in the Church, without the Authority of a Divine Appointment: And on the other hand, 'tis daring Preſumption to reject any of his Sacred Appointments, without the Authority of a Divine Repeal.

Now, the Office of Deaconſhip, as it is by univerſal Conſent originally an Inſtitution of Chriſt; ſo it ſtands, by the cleareſt Evidence, yet unrevok'd. If a Revocation be ſuppos'd, it muſt be either virtual and implicit, or formal and expreſs. A virtual Repeal there wou'd have been, in caſe the Reaſons of the Inſtitution, or Qualifications of the Perſons, had been altogether extraordinary and temporary: but, as I ſhall have Occaſion to ſhew under ſome enſuing Heads, this was not the Caſe. And if there be not an implicit Repeal, it ſeems the groſſeſt Abſurdity, and a Reflection on the Wiſdom of Chriſt in the original Appointment, to imagine there was or cou'd be an expreſs Abrogation.

And agreeably, if we ſearch the Scriptures, we ſhall find that in fact there has never been any formal and explicit Repeal of this Evangelic Inſtitution. The whole New Teſtament is ſilent on this Head: which, tho' a negative Conſideration, yet taken in its Circumſtances carries Force and Weight with it, as a good preſumptive Argument for the Stability of the Ordinance, and may help to ſilence the Cavils of thoſe who reject it as obſolete.

2. The *general Reaſon* of the Inſtitution remains thro' all Ages: There was nothing in the *Nature of the Office* of Deacons, that requir'd it to be temporary.

Tho' it might be with a more particular View to a tranſient Occaſion, I mean the Community of Goods and daily Miniſtration at *Jeruſalem*, that this Office was originally appointed; yet that muſt be acknowledged to conclude nothing againſt the Permanence of the Inſtitution: unleſs at the ſame time you will grant (as you muſt by parity of Reaſon) that the *extraordinary* Purpoſes of the *Apoſtolical* Commiſſion do afford a juſt Objection againſt a *ſtanding* Miniſtry, or the Office of ordinary Teachers. But who, except Deiſts & Quakers, can ſee any force of Argument, or will acknowlege the Conſequence, in *this* Caſe?

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We look on the *Apoſtolick* Commiſſion (in *Matth.* 28.) by the juſteſt and faireſt deduction, to inſtitute a *ſetled Miniſtry* in the Church for a perpetual Succeſſion; the Miniſtry of uninſpir'd Teachers, *for the edifying of the Body of Chriſt*, the preſerving and building up of the Church already founded. And yet it's certain, that this Commiſſion was given primarily and immediately to the *Apoſtles*, who were inſpir'd Perſons: and that more eſpecially for Ends of an extraordinary & temporary Nature; the witneſſing to Chriſt's Reſurrection, the revealing of his Doctrine and completing the Canon of Sacred Scripture, the carrying of his Goſpel to the Gentiles, modelling a new Church-State, *&c.* which prime & extraordinary purpoſes determin'd with the Apoſtolick Age. However, this notwithſtanding, 'tis acknowledg'd by all, that the Apoſtolical Commiſſion founded a ſtanding Miniſtry, for purpoſes of a more ordinary & durable nature, to continue through all Ages: which is ſufficiently evident from that ſingle Conſideration, the *Promiſe* annexed to the Commiſſion, *Lo! I am with you alway to the end of the World.*

" Hence (as one obſerves) Miniſters now, duly called, are upon the ſame Divine Foundation with the Apoſtles, and their Miniſtrations under the ſame Divine Warrant and Benediction. The Miniſtry is not a Superannuated Inſtitution. Since there are Ends and Grounds of an ordinary nature, which require a ſtanding Miniſtry, it argues *this* muſt be intended in the Apoſtolick Commiſſion. Theſe Grounds and Deſigns of the Miniſtry abiding ſtill, therefore ſo doth the Ordinance that is founded on them".

Now, with equal Reaſon, it may be ſaid, Neither is the Office of *Deacons* to be reckon'd an Antiquated Inſtitution, a thing out of Date. For there being certain Ends and Grounds of this Office, which abide ſtill, therefore ſo doth the Inſtitution in full force and vertue. Though ſome of the firſt Purpoſes of it might be occaſional and temporary; yet there being *others*, of a more ordinary and ſtanding Nature, and univerſal Concernment, we may from hence juſtly infer its laſting Obligation. As long as there is proper *Buſineſs* for the Deacon, the Office ought to take place, be receiv'd and maintain'd: And as long as there are *Tables* to be ſerv'd, there muſt & will

be Buſineſs proper for this Officer. Now as long as Chriſt has *a viſible Church* and People in the World, there *will be* Tables to be ſerv'd.

If it was originally one Care of the Deacons to make the neceſſary Proviſion for the *Lord's Table*, and be Servitours or Waiters at the Holy Supper, to diſtribute the conſecrated Bread and Wine among the Communicants; *This* is a Buſineſs that continues ſtill: and the Decency and Propriety of ſtated Perſons to attend on this Buſineſs, are ſuch as afford an Argument for the Continuance of the Order of Deacons unto that End.

Again, if it was originally the Deacons particular Care to ſee to the comfortable Support of the *Teaching Officers*, that they which *preach the Goſpel may live of the Goſpel, be provided with what is comely*, and have ſecur'd to 'em the *double Honour*, which all confeſs is their juſt Wages, that they may attend on the Lord without Diſtraction; *This* alſo is a ſtanding Care: and the Expediency of the Church's having ſtated Perſons to regard this as their proper Concern, ſtill beſpeaks the Subſiſting of the Office of Deacons.

In fine, If it was originally one Deſign and Work of the Deacons, in behalf of the Church, to take Care of the *Poor* Saints, the Stranger, the Widow and Fatherleſs, the Sick and Impotent; *This* likewiſe being a Duty of perpetual obligation on the Church of Chriſt, and the Convenience, the Importance of having ſtated known Perſons to attend continually on this very Thing, being ſo evident, it neceſſarily reſults from hence alſo, that the Office of Deacons is of perpetual Continuance by Divine Inſtitution.

Upon this Argument I wou'd a little enlarge, and ſay for the obviating a common Objection; I am humbly of Opinion, The Buſineſs of a Deacon is no ſuch circumſtantial thing, as to be left precarious, and liable to be ſuperſeded by any Proviſion, which civil Communities may make for their poor Members. For ſuch Communities, as Civil, muſt and will equally reſpect their Poor, without a Diſtinction of any for their *Chriſtian* Character. Whereas now the Lord Chriſt expects of his profeſſing People, that they particularly regard the poor *Saints*; Doing good to all Men, but *eſpecially* to them which are

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of the *Houſehold of Faith*, (*Gal.* 6. 10.) And promiſes Divine Rewards only unto Charities given to Diſciples *in the name of Diſciples*, Matth. 10. 42. Our Saviour has obſerv'd to us, *Matth.* 26. 11. *The Poor ye have* ALWAYS *with you*, to furniſh out Occaſions and call you to the Exerciſe of Charity. And ye remember the Words of the Lord *Jeſus*, how he ſaid, *It is more bleſſed to give, than to receive*, (Act. 20. 35.) eſpecially to give to the poor Saints. This our Lord mentions as the *grand Teſt* in the great Day, *Matth.* 25. 40. *Inaſmuch as ye have done it unto one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, ye have done it unto me* ----. And this Charity is the Duty of every Church of Chriſt; collectively conſider'd, as well as ſeparately in particular Perſons. The Apoſtle commends the *Churches* of *Macedonia* for the Riches of their Liberality; who to their Power (he bears Record) yea, and *beyond their Power*, were willing to communicate, 2 *Cor.* 8. 1, 2, 3. --- And to the Church at *Corinth* he writes (1 Epiſt. 16. 1.) *Now concerning the Collection for the Saints, as I have given Order to the Churches of* Galatia, *even ſo do ye.*---But perhaps it may be objected, This Text relates to an extraordinary Caſe in thoſe Times of Perſecution. I will then produce another Scripture, wherein we have a Rule, evidently (it may be, as any of the inſpir'd Apoſtolick Canons) of ſtanding Obligation; 'tis that in 1 *Tim.* 5. 16. *If any Man or Woman, that believeth, have Widows* (*i. e.* near Relations poor & neceſſitous) *let them* (if they be able) *relieve them: and let not the* CHURCH *be charged*, (put to unneceſſary Expence in that Regard) *That it may relieve them that are Widows* INDEED, i. e. as in *ver.* 5. Widows that are Deſolate, truly deſtitute, not only poor and unable to provide for themſelves, but without Friends or Relatives able to help them.

Now as it's thus a Duty incumbent on Church-Societies (*as ſuch*) to relieve the Poor, ſo 'tis highly expedient for the better performing of this Eccleſiaſtical Duty, that they do not leave the Affair at a looſe Rate, but manage it in ſome way of Method and Order; and therefore that (purſuant to the primitive Pattern) they *look out from among themſelves* ſome particular Perſons, Men of ſuitable Qualifications, *whom we may appoint over*

this Buſineſs of ſerving Tables; who ſhall make it their Work to ſearch out the poor Saints, and if need be report to the Church the Occcaſions for Charity, and ſtir them up to their Duty; ſhall receive the Church's Alms, and faithfully diſtribute the ſame, as may beſt anſwer the Ends of Chriſtian Charity. So then it is a true Saying, *If a Man deſire the Office of a* Deacon, *he deſires a good Work*; good and profitable unto Men, and not of little Importance to the Churches of the Saints.

And thus I have ſhewn that the fundamental *Reaſons* of the Inſtitution of Deacons being ſuch as have an Aſpect upon all Ages, and remain even unto this Day, by juſt Conſequence the Office ought ſtill to be acknowledged and ſupported.

But, before I proceed to my next Argument, it may gratify ſome to take Notice of another Objection againſt the Neceſſity of a diſtinct Order of Deacons, for Works of Charity, *Viz.* That however the *Apoſtles*, being in *itinerant* Circumſtances, might need ſuch *Helps*, in miniſtring to the Saints; yet now the Miniſters of the Word are in a *quiet, ſetled* State, they can do the Work as well *themſelves*, without ſuch Aſſiſtants ---. To which it is ſufficient to reply, That theſe *Helps* were deſign'd not for the Relief of the Apoſtles only, but of all Teachers of the Word, tho' fixed in particular Charges: and therefore are ſpoken of as found in Churches, that had fixed Paſtors, and Goſpel-Order fully eſtabliſh'd in them. Beſides, had the Apoſtles looked on it their proper Province to take Care of the Poor (otherwiſe than as in Common with all Chriſtian Profeſſors, by way of Charity) what need was there when they wanted *Helps*, in ſerving of Tables, to take theſe from among the *Laity* or Populace; ſince there was ſuch an abundant Supply of *Miniſters* in that day of Inſpiration! Suppoſing the Apoſtles itinerant unſettled Condition might very much hinder *them* from perſonally performing this good Work; yet ſince there was a Plenty of other Miniſters, in that Day, why ſhould any of the Fraternity be choſen to this Work, and have one (ſuppoſed) Branch of the Apoſtolick Office formally ſeated in them; and not rather ſome in the Miniſtry be appointed to attend & aſſiſt the Apoſtles! ---So that the *Objection* ſeems to hold equally againſt the *firſt Inſtitution*,

as

as the Propagation and Continuance of the *Office of a Deacon*, conſider'd in Diſtinction from the Miniſtry of the Word.

But I will offer two Hints further here, *Viz.* That *all* Miniſters of the Word ſeem to have the ſame general Objection, as the Apoſtles, lying againſt their concerning themſelves with the Deacons Buſineſs, at leaſt ſo far as it may be any Burden or Impediment to them: and may juſtly ſay, as in *Acts* 6. *It is not Reaſon that we ſhould leave the Word of God, and ſerve Tables* ---. And then, altho' there be not exactly the ſame Service, and an equal degree of Care & Labour for Deacons to attend in theſe Days, as when they were firſt inſtituted; yet this will not juſtify the throwing Contempt on a Divine Appointment, as if it were therefore altogether needleſs. Let it be conſider'd (what the Apoſtle obſerves, 2 *Cor.* 12.) *The Body is not one Member, but many. And the Eye cannot ſay unto the Hand, I have no need of thee; nor again even the Head to the Feet, I have no need of you. Nay, thoſe Members of the Body, which ſeem to be more feeble, are neceſſary. Now ye are the Body of Chriſt, and Members in particular. And God hath ſet ſome in the Church,* HELPS; and not Teachers only.

But I proceed to obſerve ---,

3. The *Qualifications* requir'd of a Deacon, are in their Nature *ordinary* or common; and imply nothing peculiar to the Apoſtolic Age, that ſhou'd argue the Office to be temporary.

I confeſs, if the Deacons Qualifications had been altogether *extraordinary*, and ſuch as were confin'd to the Times of Inſpiration, it wou'd have afforded a probable Argument, that the Office was not intended for any longer Continuance: And (as hinted before) the *Ceaſing* of thoſe Supernatural Gifts and Powers might be juſtly look'd on as in Effect a *Repeal* of the Inſtitution. But the Caſe is manifeſtly far otherwiſe.

For, as the Nature of the Office does not tell us there was any *Occaſion* for extraordinary inſpir'd Gifts, to qualify Men for it; ſo neither do I apprehend, the Qualifications laid down by the Apoſtle in our *Context*, are

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any more than common Attainments; whether the Character he gives of approv'd Deacons, be conſider'd in its intellectual or moral View. The Furniture here requir'd to make Perſons meet Recipients of this Office, conſiſts of theſe Particulars; namely, *Gravity*, *Sincerity*, *Temperance*, *Generoſity* and *Openneſs of heart*, *Soundneſs in the Faith*, *and a pure Conſcience*: and if in the married State, being *agreably Match'd*, exerciſing *conjugal Fidelity*, *good Parental Government*, *and a Care of Family-Order*; and in the general, a *blameleſs Life*. Now theſe are the Fruit of the Spirit in his common and ordinary Influences, and imply nothing of extraordinary and ſpecial Inſpiration.

Indeed, whereas in the Deſcription of the Men to be choſen into this Office at its original Inſtitution, beſides that it's required they be Men of *honeſt Report* & good *Diſcretion*, 'tis one Requiſite mention'd, that they be *full of the Holy Ghoſt*; ſome are of Opinion, this reſpects the *extraordinary* Gifts of the Spirit.

Now, if this ſhou'd be *conceded* to, yet the Want of theſe miraculous Gifts is no more a juſt argument againſt the Continuance of the Deacons Office, than it is againſt a ſtanding Order of Teachers; ſince theſe Gifts were in thoſe primitive Times at leaſt equally requiſite to the Office of publick Teachers. Nevertheleſs in the Caſe of Teachers, this Defect is not allow'd to paſs for a ſufficient Objection againſt the Continuance of *their* Office: and therefore it is notorious Partiality to plead it againſt the Continuance of the Order of Deacons.

But then I ſee no Neceſſity of ſuch a Conceſſion; becauſe this being *full of the Holy Ghoſt* may with equal Reaſon be underſtood of the *Graces* of the Spirit, and particularly thoſe of Chriſtian Courage, Faith, Hope and Joy: ſince the Phraſe is elſewhere uſed in this common Senſe. It's ſaid of *Barnabas*, while yet he ſeems not to have poſſeſs'd the inſpired Gifts of an Apoſtle, Act. 11. 24. *He was a good Man, and full of the Holy Ghoſt, and of Faith.* GOD had not given him the Spirit of Fear, but of Power, and of Love, and of a ſound Mind. He had a holy Courage, the Reſult of a lively Faith and Hope towards God, and boldly profeſſed the Goſ-

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pel of Chriſt. So it's ſaid of *Peter*, Act. 4. 8. *Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghoſt, ſaid, Ye Rulers*, &c. It follows, Ver. 13. *Now when they ſaw the Boldneſs of Peter and John, and perceived they were unlearned and ignorant Men* (by Education) *they marvelled.* We read alſo in *Ver.* 31. *They were all filled with the holy Ghoſt, and they ſpake the Word of God with Boldneſs.* It follows, in Ver. 52. *And the Diſciples were filled with Joy, and with the holy Ghoſt.*

Theſe Texts may ſerve to explain the Qualification requir'd of Deacons, that they be *full of the holy Ghoſt* ; i. e. They ſhould be not only ſuch as have experienced the Renewing of the holy Ghoſt, but who have the Graces of the Spirit appearing in them with ſome diſtinguiſhing Luſtre ; Men full of Faith & Love, & Hope, and holy Zeal, bold in their God to profeſs the Goſpel, to adhere conſtantly to the Cauſe of Chriſt, to attend and aſſiſt his Miniſters, and cheerfully to ſuccour his Poor, in the midſt of all Temptations, Oppoſitions and Diſcouragements: Which is a Character remarkably ſuted to the Circumſtances of primitive Times ; but not unagreable to the moſt ſetled and proſperous State of Things in the Church of God.

It is always requiſite, that the Officers of the Church, whether Elders or Deacons, ſhould be Men *full of the Holy Ghoſt*, in his ordinary Gifts, Graces and Comforts.

Thus it appears, that the preſcrib'd *Qualifications* for the Deacons Office imply nothing in their Nature extraordinary, or peculiar to the Apoſtolick Age. And this is one juſt Ground of Preſumption, that it was intended for a longer Duration, and to be perpetuated among Chriſtians.

But I come now to the concluding Argument,---

4. The Spirit of God has given expreſs *Orders* and *Inſtructions* unto the Miniſters and Churches of Chriſt, to govern them in the *Election* and *Appointment* of this particular Church-Officer ; which are of indiſpenſable univerſal Obligation : And conſequently the Inſtitution muſt be deſign'd for a perpetual Subſiſtence.

There are certain Rules given by a Divinely inſpir'd Apoſtle, *long after the primitive Inſtitution*, and that without

without any particular Reference to *Jeruſalem*, or Limitation to the *firſt Ages* of the Goſpel, relating to the Choice & Conſtitution of *Deacons*: Which Rules are on Scripture-Record, and to be entertain'd as Apoſtolick Canons, indiſputably authentick, of univerſal Concernment, and of laſting Force and Obligation; as much as any other Precepts or Inſtitutes in the ſacred Context.

Theſe Epiſtles of *Paul* to his Son *Timothy*, he wrote as an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, by the Commandment of God our Saviour, with a ſpecial View to the inſtructing him *how he ought to behave himſelf in the Church of God*; particularly in the Affairs of Divine Worſhip, Preaching, Diſcipline and Ordination. The Counſels and Charges given to *Timothy*, under theſe ſeveral Heads, were never yet by any Expoſitors (that I know of) look'd upon as merely *Perſonal*, or terminating in him alone: but have always been conſider'd and made uſe of, as having a general Aſpect, and applicable by parity of Reaſon, to others ſuſtaining the Miniſterial Character, in every ſucceeding Age. They truly exhibit to us a noble Plan of Goſpel-Order, and are moſt fully inſtructive as to Church-Officers. Particularly in this third Chapter of his firſt Epiſtle, the inſpir'd Doctor of the *Gentiles* gives us diſtinctly the Qualifications, firſt of *Biſhops*, and then of *Deacons*. Now his Directions under the former Head have ever been receiv'd, as of ſtanding Uſe and immutable Obligation: And why the Directions in the latter Caſe ſhou'd not be allow'd the ſame Conſideration, I cannot ſee any Shadow of Argument.

Surely that Word, *Let them uſe the Office of a Deacon, being firſt proved*, is a ſacred Injunction, that reſpects all future Ages; and ſo is a loud Teſtimony to the perpetual Continuance of the Inſtitution: For it implies a *Command* that ſome *ſhall* uſe this Office, and be ſeparated to it. This ſhews that the Apoſtles (& they cou'd not be miſtaken) were beyond all Controverſy of Opinion, that the Deacons Office was to continue in the Church. Why elſe ſhould they not only ordain ſome unto it themſelves; but leave a ſtanding Rule for the ordaining of others ſtill? This ſhews the Office is not left *Diſcretional*.

And

And when the Apoſtle, after giving the proper Directions for the chuſing and appointing of Biſhops and Deacons, preſently adds, *Theſe things write I unto thee, --- that thou mayſt know how thou oughteſt to behave thy ſelf in the houſe of God*; as it looks back to what he had ſaid in the Caſe of *Biſhops*, ſo likewiſe to what he had ſpoken in Reference to *Deacons*. And as he did not confine his Views to the ſingle Perſon of *Timothy*, in his Directions under the former Head, ſo neither under the latter: but deſign'd the Rules he gave to be of permanent Force and Uſe in both Caſes thro' every ſucceſſive Age. And that he had this extenſive View appears (as from other Paſſages in his Epiſtles, ſo in particular) from that in his 2 d Epiſt. 2 d Chap. *The Things which thou haſt heard of me*, (and the Things he had heard from him relating to *Biſhops* and *Deacons*, may well be underſtood as included here) *the ſame commit thou to faithful Men, who ſhall be able to teach others alſo.* And thus, he hop'd, the Purity and Integrity of Goſpel-Doctrine, Worſhip and Order, wou'd be preſerv'd and propagated, to the Honour of Chriſt, the Security of Religion, and Flouriſhing of the Churches from one Generation to another.

Upon the whole, to ſum up what has been argu'd: *Since* the Office of a Deacon is evidently of a *Divine* Original; *Since* the primitive Inſtitution remains uncancel'd, & without any *Repeal*, direct or indirect; *Since* the general *Reaſon* of it ever continues, and the proper *Buſineſs* and the *Qualifications* of this Order were nothing peculiar to the firſt Times of the Goſpel; And *ſince* there are Apoſtolick *Canons* directing to the Choice and Appointment of this Officer in the Churches of the *Gentiles*, as well as *Jews*, which Rules are to be underſtood as retaining ſtill their complete Virtue & Efficacy, & not to be rejected as either originally Superfluous, or now out of Date: --- from theſe Reflections, taken in a conjunct View, it muſt neceſſarily reſult, by the cleareſt and moſt rational Deduction, that the Office of Deacons was not a Thing temporary in its firſt Intention, and limited to the Days of the Apoſtles, but deſign'd for an interminable Continuance, and to be upheld in

the Churches thro' all following Times, to the End of the World.

Accordingly now let us *acknowledge* and *honour this Office*, as under a Divine Sanction, and carrying the venerable Stamp of an Apoſtolick Conſtitution. Let us take a ſutable Notice of the Authority of Chriſt in the primitive Appointment: and beware how we reflect on his Wiſdom therein, by pleading for the Abolition or Diſcontinuance of it. We may obſerve, when the Apoſtles firſt propos'd the Setting up of this Office, it's reported, (Act. 6. 5. *The ſaying pleaſed the whole Multitude.* And ſhall it not be pleaſing alſo to us, to have it continu'd in the Church!

Let us ſee our bleſſed Lord herein expreſſing a *gracious Care* for the *Bodies* (as in other Reſpects for the Souls) of Men, and a tender Compaſſion to the *Poor* of the Flock, as well as Regard to the Eaſe and Accommodation of the *Miniſters* of his Word: and let us not deny Him the Glory due to his Name on theſe Accounts.----

Further, ſuch as are *called to* this Office in the Church at any time, ſhou'd take Heed how they throw Contempt on a Divine Inſtitution, in *ſhifting it off* by trifling Excuſes, and *undervaluing* it as an inferiour Station.

In fine, Let ſuch as are *engag'd* in this Office among us, conſider *from whence* they derive their Commiſſion, and *to whom* they muſt give an Account of their Stewardſhip, even the Lord Jesus Christ, their Maſter that is in Heaven: ---- Which Reflections will have an excellent Influence, by the Grace of God, to direct and animate them in all their pious and charitable Miniſtrations, Cares and Attendences.

But thus much for the firſt Doctrine. I have been carry'd out, in the Diſcuſſion of this Argument, to a Length abundantly beyond my Proſpect or Intention when I enter'd on the Subject: and am therefore oblig'd to reduce what I have to ſay on the Heads remaining, to a ſhorter Compaſs.

We proceed now to another Obſervation. ----

Doct.

Doct. II. *Perſons are to be firſt* Prov'd, *and then to uſe this Office of a Deacon, being found blameleſs.* This is the expreſs Letter of the Text. Now the Word Δοκιμαζέσθωσαν implies both Probation and Approbation. Agreably I ſhall ſay,

1. There muſt be a *Probation* or Trial of Perſons Qualifications, previous to their Admiſſion into this Office.

If Church-Members are to be firſt prov'd, much more Church-Officers. To what End are their proper Qualifications ſtated in Scripture, if without any Regard to them Elections may be made at all Adventures! Certainly the Rules of common Prudence require, that ſuch a publick Truſt be not repos'd in any, till they be firſt prov'd, whether they have competent Abilities for the Diſcharge of it, and poſſeſs that good Character, which may ſpeak them worthy of the Confidence that muſt be put in ſuch as are admitted this Office. To appoint Men over this Buſineſs, without examining whether they have the requiſite Fitneſs for it, wou'd be ſinful Raſhneſs: Which the Holy Ghoſt enters that ſolemn Caution againſt, 1 Tim. 5. 22. *Lay hands ſuddenly on no Man*; whether for the Office of a Biſhop, or a Deacon. The Apoſtle had been treating of both: and I doubt not, refers to both in this Caution againſt *laying on hands ſuddenly.*

I ſhall here offer only this one Remark further; That the Trial intended by the Apoſtle ſeems to be *antecedent* to Mens uſing the Office, and means a ſerious impartial comparing their Abilities, Tempers and Deportments, " with the *Characters* of one meet for ſuch " an Office, which he had before laid down. For it is " plain, in the 6th Chap. of the *Acts*, they were di- " rected to examine and look into the Qualifications " and Fitneſs of the Perſons to be choſen for Deacons, " *before* they made Choice of them " †. Which neceſſarily infers, ----

2. There muſt be an *Approbation* of them, as Perſons fit and ſutable for ſuch a Truſt.

† *Sermon at an Ordination of a Deacon*, &c. pag. 12. By N. C. —— *London.*

The Apoſtle here requires, that upon Examination they be *found blameleſs*, before they be admitted to uſe the Office. Agreably in the *Acts*, 'tis preſcrib'd, that they be *Men of honeſt Report*: Having given Proof of their Capacity & Fidelity in other places of ſpecial Truſt, or in the Commerce and Buſineſs of common Life; and without any juſt Exception lying againſt them, either as to Soundneſs in the Faith, Purity of Manners, or Powers of Underſtanding and Judgment.

Now this Approbation is to be conſider'd primarily as the Act of the *Church*; unto whom belongs the Election, or Nomination of the Perſons. 1 Cor. 16. 3. *Whomſoever you ſhall approve, them I will ſend to bring your Liberality.* Even at their firſt Inſtitution the Holy Ghoſt did not immediately interpoſe in the Deſignation of the Perſons: but the inſpir'd Apoſtles refer'd it to the *Brethren* (who are, without Diſpute, competent Judges, in the Caſe of Deacons; whatever they be in that of Elders) to make the Election, according to their beſt Judgment; only reſerving to themſelves the Power of Ordination, *Act.* 6. 3.

A late Epiſcopal Author * makes the following Conceſſions,----

"As to the Caſe of the ſeven Deacons (ſays he) "they were left to the Inquiry, Choice, and Nomina- "tion of the *Brethren*, there is no Doubt of it. ---- "'Tis plain, the Apoſtles referring the Nomination of "them to the *Brethren* was upon that ſingle Score of "finding out Perſons *They* wou'd entruſt with the Con- "tributions of the Church, for the *Daily Miniſtrations*, "and for the *ſerving of Tables*: For that was the *only* "*thing* in open Agitation, and the holy Apoſtles "aſſign'd that ſpecial Part to them: *Look you out Men* "&c. *whom we may appoint over this Buſineſs.*

"So that theſe Deacons (he adds) ſo far as it was "needful they ſhould be faithful and truſty Stewards "of the Contributions and Treaſure of the Church, "were order'd to be choſen and recommended

* *An* Original Draught *of the Primitive Church, in Anſwer to an* Enquiry *into the Conſtitution*, &c. 3 d. Edit. pag. 159, 160.

"by

" *by the Members of it*, whoſe Stock and Treaſure they " were to be entruſted withal; and for the like Reaſon " (no doubt of it) that another Apoſtle gives us upon " the like Occaſion, namely, *To avoid this, that no* " *Man ſhould blame us* (ſays S. *Paul*) *in this Abun-* " *dance which is adminiſtred by us*: For ſuch ſort of " Cenſures might the Apoſtles have been liable to, had " they aſſum'd the Nomination of the perſons to them- " ſelves; but by the Courſe they took, they *provided* " *for honeſt things, not only in the ſight of the Lord,* " *but alſo in the ſight of Men*, 2 Cor. 8. 20, 21."

I will add then I think we have here a plain *Precedent for the People's Right of Suffrages in Eccleſiaſtical Affairs*; and ſuch as *goes far towards eſtabliſhing a ſtanding Right and Authority in all Chriſtian Congregations, to chooſe their own* Officers *for themſelves*, and beſure the *Deacons* at leaſt. A ſtated Right in the People of *Election*, *Nomination*, or *Approbation* (call it which you pleaſe) in the preſent Caſe, not only ſeems evidently founded in *Reaſon*, but alſo has the Warrant of *Scripture-Example*. It's of *original Inſtitution from the holy Apoſtles*: and therefore 'tis no Uſurpation in the Churches, which exerciſe it: but they have a *Divine Charter* to juſtify their Claim of ſo apparent a fundamental Right of Church-Societies.

Yet, inaſmuch as it lies with the *Paſtors* to *ordain*, This of Conſequence neceſſarily draws with it a Power in them of judging and conſenting. So that the Elders have a ſecondary Right in this Affair: and the juſt Order of proceeding demands, that the Church's Election of Perſons to any Office be confirm'd by the Approbation of the Elderſhip, if any there is in Being among them!

It may be added,

3. This Approbation is to be follow'd with a *publick Separation* of the Perſons unto their Office; which indeed is a *practical* Approbation.

The Apoſtle ſays, *Let theſe be firſt proved*; THEN *let them uſe the Office of a Deacon*: Yet this doubtleſs not without a ſolemn *Introduction* or *Inveſtiture*; for that muſt needs be imply'd: which truly is but agreable to the

the excellent Nature and Importance of this Eccleſiaſtical Truſt; and requiſite to give Perſons the current Repute of Officers in the Church, to preſerve the proper Diſtinction between the Officers and the other Members of the ſacred Community, and to engage them by a mutual Covenant to be faithful in performing the reſpective Duties they owe to one another.

" Perſons cannot in civil Societies ſuſtain any publick " Character without a proper Inveſtiture. A Man can't " be a Juſtice of Peace without having a Commiſſion " from the civil Authority, and being ſworn: nor act as " a Conſtable, or in almoſt any other inferior Office, but " he muſt take the proper Oaths. And there's no body " but owns theſe to be *very wiſe* Conſtitutions. Now " if they are ſo in the *State*, methinks they cannot be " otherwiſe in the *Church*.

The *Reaſon of the Thing* ſtrongly infers an Obligation, that where the ſacred Depoſitum of an Eccleſiaſtical Stock for Uſes of Piety and Charity (be it more or leſs) which can't be embezzl'd or alienated without the Guilt of horrible Sacrilege, is committed to any, the Party ſo entruſted ſhould come under a ſolemn *Oath* of Fidelity; the adminiſtring of which (tho' without the ſpecial Formalities us'd in civil Caſes) is, according to the View I have of the Thing, one grand Deſign of *Ordination*.

Moreover, *Apoſtolical Example*, which with all impartial Inquirers muſt needs have the Force of a Precept in the Caſe of *Deacons*, as much as in that of *Elders*, very plainly *directs* to this point of Order in the Admiſſion of any to the Office of a Deacon; that there be a ſolemn Inveſtiture, or publick Separation of them hereunto: and points out the proper Methods in doing it, *Prayer* and *Laying on of the hands of the Presbytery*. Thus at the primitive Inſtitution, Acts 6. 6. *Whom they ſet before the Apoſtles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.* Here's as clear and unexceptionable a Precedent for the Ordination of *Deacons*, to the Office of ſerving Tables, as is any where to be found throughout the whole Story of the *Acts* for the ordaining of *Elders* or *Biſhops*, unto the Miniſtry of the Word. Sure I am, the Mind and Will of Chriſt may be learnt from Apoſtolical Example, as well in one Caſe, as in the other;

other; That theſe Eccleſiaſticks ſhould be initiated into their reſpective Offices in ſolemn Form, by publick Prayer, with Impoſition of the Hands of the *Presbytery* *. And the neglect of this, if it be not a Deficiency in point of Order, if it be not an unjuſtifiable Omiſſion, againſt the Reaſon of Things, and againſt the Authority of Scripture-Pattern, in the Caſe of *Deacons*, when any are ſolemnly choſen to this Office; I know not at preſent upon what defenſible Grounds the ſame Omiſſion can be cenſur'd in the Caſe of *Elders*. Indeed one Officer is of greater Importance than the other: and ſo are ſome Ordinances than others. However, the reveal'd Will of Chriſt is to be regarded in every Inſtance, tho' of the minuteſt Conſideration. We muſt *obſerve all things, whatſoever he hath commanded us*, and beware of *breaking one of theſe leaſt Commandments*. A conſcientious Niceneſs in Matters of Divine Inſtitution is truly laudable: and it reflects an eminent Beauty and Glory on the Churches, when the Rules of Goſpel-Order are exactly and uniformly obſerved in them. 1 Cor. 11. 2. *Now I praiſe you, Brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.* Col. 2. 5. *For though I be abſent in the fleſh, yet am I with you in the ſpirit, joying and beholding your order, and the ſtedfaſtneſs of your faith in Chriſt.*

For a Concluſion of this Head, let me recite to you the Words of a late learned Presbyterian Writer, who makes the following ingenuous Confeſſion. ---- Here "(ſays he) it may be objected, againſt the *Deacons* "among the Presbyterians, that they are not *ordain'd*: "And I grant, what is objected is true; but *freely ac-* "*knowledge that it* OUGHT TO BE OTHERWISE, and "that they ought to be ordained by the *Laying on of* "*the Hands of the Presbytery*, as were the firſt Seven: "For GOD's written Word is the only Rule of Chriſti-"ans; from which, in one Jot, they ought not to "ſwerve, but ought earneſtly to ſtudy and follow it †.

* "*Many moderate* Epiſcopal *Men will allow* Presbyters "*to ordain* Deacons, *that will not allow them to ordain* "*Presbyters.*—— Baxter's *Chriſtian Concord def.* p. 9.

† Jameſon's *Sum of Epiſcop. Controv.* p. 86.

But we must hasten to the last Observation.

Doct. III. This Consideration, that *such as have used the Office of a Deacon well, do purchase to themselves a good Degree*, &c. --- is what affords Encouragement both to an *Engaging* in this Office, and the *Ordaining* of meet Persons unto it.

This is agreable to the Tenour and Design of our Text. The Apostle having given that Direction, *Let these also first be proved; then let them use the Office of a Deacon*: presently subjoyns, by way of Argument to enforce the preceeding Direction, For *they that have used the Office of a Deacon well, purchase to themselves a good Degree*, &c.

Here,

1. I thought distinctly to have considered the Duty of Persons in the *Deacon's Office*; and to have shown what is imply'd in *using* the same *well*.

But the Time will permit me only a few Hints.

In general, if they would use their Office well, they must in all their Administrations constantly make the *Word* of Christ their governing *Rule*, and his *Glory* their prevailing *Design*; whatsoever they do, doing all *in the Name of Christ*, whose Stewards they are, to receive, keep, and dispose of his Goods.

They must act in their Office with *Sincerity*: as the Servants of Christ, doing the Will of God from the Heart; having their Souls engaged in doing Service, as to the Lord, and not to Men. That's usually apply'd to Deacons, Rom. 12. 8. *He that giveth, let him do it with Simplicity.*

They must act in their Office with *Integrity* and *Fidelity*: exercising all the Powers of their Office, and attending to all the parts of Duty incumbent upon them, with Constancy, Care and Zeal; and applying the public Monies, to those Evangelical Ends, for which they were given, without Fraud, or needless Delay. They should be like those, of whom we are told, Neh. 13. 13. *They were counted faithful, and their Office was to distribute unto their Brethren.* Agreably the Apostle observes, 1 Cor. 4. 2. *It is required in Stewards, that a Man be found faithful.*

In

In order to Faithfulneſs, it ſhou'd ſeem, *Diligence* is requiſite: and this the Apoſtle commends in one, whom the Church employ'd in miniſtring to the Saints, 2 Cor. 8 22. *Our Brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent*; --- ſuppoſe, in collecting Charities, and diſtributing of them.

Moreover, They muſt act in their Office with *Prudence*. All publick Offices are more or leſs attended with Difficulty, and peculiarly expoſe to Cenſure. They, whoſe Buſineſs it is to ſerve Tables, had Need be *Wiſe* as well as faithful Stewards, if they would uſe their Office well; *Avoiding this that no Man blame them*. Agreably 'twas one of the fundamental Requiſites in the Character of the primitive Deacons, Act. 6. 3. *Full of Wiſdom*. They muſt be wiſe, to ſhun all appearances of Evil, and provide Things Honeſt in the ſight of all Men. They muſt be wiſe, to eſpy and improve all Advantages for promoting the good Ends of their pious and charitable Function. They muſt labour to be underſtanding in the Times, knowing of Men and Things; and prudently endeavour, by perſonal Applications, to put others upon doing their Duty, in giving proportionably to uſes of Piety and Charity. They muſt wiſely conduct themſelves in regard of the *Miniſters* of the Word, whoſe Tables are one proper part of their pious Care; that the Labourer, who is *worthy of his Hire*, be not defrauded and diſcourag'd. They muſt alſo conſider the *Poor*; watching for ſutable Occaſions of Charity, making the reaſonable and neceſſary Diſtinctions between one Caſe and another, timing well and adjuſting their Diſtributions to the Neceſſities of the Saints, and labouring to manage all their Affairs with due Thought and *Diſcretion*.

Further, if they would uſe their Office well, they muſt do nothing by *Partiality*: but ſerve the Tables committed to their Care in the moſt equal manner, without a carnal and unjuſt *preferring one before another*. An Apprehenſion of this criminal Partiality in the daily Miniſtration, while under the Apoſtles Management, was the Reaſon of the *Grecians* murmuring againſt the *Hebrews*: and this Emergence was the immediate

Occaſion of ſetting up the Office of Deacons; as the beſt Method to ſuppreſs the preſent Jealouſies, and provide for an equal and ſatisfactory Miniſtration for the future.

Again, They muſt act in their Office with a *willing* and *generous* Mind. *Rom.* 12. 8. *He that ſheweth Mercy*, let him do it *with chearfulneſs*. They muſt put on Bowels of Mercy; be pitiful, be courteous, open-hearted; and give, not grudgingly, but with a tender Sympathy of Spirit and Liberality of Hand. They muſt deal out the Alms of the Church, *as a matter of Bounty, and not of Covetouſneſs*---. Beſure they muſt take heed they be not govern'd by *Selfiſh* Reſpects, nor uſe their Office for a Cloak of Covetouſneſs. As they muſt not be Prodigals, *given to much Wine*, and waſting their Lord's Goods in riotous Living: So neither Miſers, *given to filthy Lucre*, and having Hearts exerciſed with covetous Practices. It was the Sin of *Judas*, who had the Bag, and bare what was put therein, that while he pretended to care for the Poor, he was a *Thief*, and his Heart went after his Covetouſneſs. It's eminently a Scandal in *Deacons*, and loudly contradicts the Ends of their Office, to ſhew a narrow niggardly, ſelf-ſeeking Diſpoſition. They ſhou'd *above all things put on Charity*; that Charity, which is *kind*, which *envieth not*, which *ſeeketh not her own*: but is the Principle of a noble Self-denial, Bountifulneſs, and Largeneſs of Heart. However ſtill their Liberality muſt be guided by Prudence, and guarded by wiſe and juſt Limitations. Frugality and Generoſity ſhou'd appear with a happy mixture in all their Managements.

It may be added,

They ſhou'd endeavour to conduct all their charitable Adminiſtrations *after a godly ſort*; and will do well to accompany their Viſits and Reliefs to the Bodies of Men, with ſome pious Advices for the good of their *Souls*; the common Duty of Chriſtian *Brethren*; according to that of the Apoſtle, (1 Theſs. 5. 14.) *Warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, ſupport the weak*. And they will do well ſometimes, as there may be Occaſion, alſo to *help together by Prayer*. Thus they will ſhew themſelves *full of all Goodneſs*, and ſignalize their Character as Helps to the Miniſtry. And thus the Poor will experience a *double Charity*.

Yet

Yet it must be subjoyned here;

They that wou'd use the Office of a Deacon well, must keep within the proper *Limits* of their Station, and not stretch themselves beyond their Line, to invade the peculiar Province of Bishops or Pastors of the Church. The *serving of Tables*, the outward Business of the House of God, was the Business over which the primitive Deacons were appointed, by inspir'd *Apostles*, who thought it not *Reason that Ministers shou'd leave the Word, to serve Tables:* Herein manifestly putting a Distinction between these two, as Offices widely different, and incompatible to one and the same Person, as to the stated Exercise of them. Some indeed think, the *Seven* were Preachers of the Gospel: But that's very improbable, from the whole Tenour of the sacred Story, and from this particular Consideration, That they must *leave the Word*, if they undertook to *serve Tables*: which was a thing they cou'd not in *Reason* do; as being under the same Obligations with the Apostles, to *give themselves continually to the Word and Prayer* ---. As to what we read afterwards concerning *Two* of the Seven, neither can any Argument be collected from thence to support the Pretences of baptizing and preaching Deacons. "*Stephen* only *disputes* in the Schools; and *pleads*, when accus'd, at the Bar". His Apology appears merely occasional, and becoming any Christian Confessor. As for *Philip* indeed we find him preaching & baptizing: yet not as a Deacon, but as an *Evangelist*. This Title is expresly given him, *Acts* 21. 8. Now the Work of an Evangelist was not to *serve Tables*, but to *preach the Word*: and whereas the Deacon was a fixed *Resident*, the Evangelist was an unsetled *Itinerant*. Hence we have just Grounds to conclude that when *Philip* was call'd to be a Preacher, he put off the Deacon, as inconsistent. Besure, attending on the *daily* Ministration at *Jerusalem* cou'd not very well consist with his going abroad to preach the Gospel. The occasion of *Philip's* going forth to this Work, and quitting his Station at *Jerusalem*, seems to be the great Persecution, that arose upon *Stephen's* Death; whereby the Church there was broken up and scattered abroad. Then Philip *went down to* Samaria, *and preached Christ unto them*, Act. 8. 5.

And from thenceforth he gave himſelf to the Work of an Evangeliſt; being either ordained to it by the Apoſtles, or immediately call'd by the Holy Ghoſt ----. There's nothing then of an Example in *Philip* or *Stephen*, to countenance *Deacons* in publick *Preaching* or *Baptizing*, by vertue of their *Diaconal* Ordination. But in doing either, they muſt certainly tranſgreſs the juſt Bounds of their Office; the original Deſign of which evidently was to ſerve Tables, in Contradiſtinction to the Miniſtry of the Word.

I ſhall only add,

Thoſe in the Deacons Office, that wou'd uſe it well, muſt ſtudy to adorn their Character, by a ſhining *Example* of good Works, and of a ſober, diſcreet, and uſeful Converſation. *Likewiſe the Deacons muſt be grave*, &c. As Church-Officers, they are in a diſtinguiſh'd Poſt: and ſhould make it their Care to ſet a laudable Pattern of Temperance, Solidity, Probity, Purity, Charity and Devotion; that others ſeeing their good Works, may glorify God, by admiring the Grace of Chriſt beſtowed upon them, and by imitating their bright Example.

Thus I've ſhown how they muſt behave, if they wou'd uſe their Office well. And let it now be briefly ſuggeſted,

2. If they thus uſe their Office well, *they purchaſe to themſelves a good Degree* and great Boldneſs in the Faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus. Upon this I find a Variety of Gloſſes made by Expoſitors.

By a *good Degree*, there are that underſtand a *Seat* of ſome Eminence in the publick Aſſembly. But this ſeems too low a Senſe.

Others ſay, it means, they acquire to themſelves a good Degree *above the Vulgar*; a good ſtanding in the Church, whereby they may boldly adminiſter their Office, and bear ſome Authority and Influence.

Others again interpret it; They are in a hopeful way towards Preferment, and acquire to themſelves a juſt Title thereto. *Philip* is an Inſtance of this Advancement. Some think, anciently the Paſtors were often elected from among the Deacons: That they were a kind of Seminary or Nurſery, out of which the Church was for the moſt part furniſh'd with meet Perſons for the

Miniſtry

Miniſtry of the Word; that they having in their lower Station given ſufficient Evidence of their Orthodoxy, Piety & Prudence, & gain'd ſome Experience in Chriſtianity, were reckon'd the proper Candidates for promotion to the Paſtoral Care.

In fine, By purchaſing to themſelves a good Degree may be intended their acquiring a *valuable Reputation*, Eſteem and Honour among the People of GOD; which gives them ſingular Advantages to be uſeful, and ſerves to embolden them in aſſerting and promoting the Cauſe of Chriſt. *Stephen* (one of the firſt Deacons) was the very firſt Martyr, and brought great Glory to Chriſt and the Goſpel by his Boldneſs in the Faith. So he purchaſed to himſelf a good Degree, and his Memory is Bleſſed. It may be added, Such obtain Honour from GOD in a better World, diſtinguiſhing Rewards in the Church Triumphant.

But it remains to ſay, ----

3. *Theſe Conſiderations are juſt Incentives unto the Churches and Miniſters of Chriſt, to elect & ſeparate meet Perſons to the* Deacons *Office, and unto ſuch to* engage *in it, and be careful to* uſe it well.

The Apoſtle might have all theſe Views, in our Text.

He deſign'd to preſs on *Timothy* (and in him on all ſucceeding Miniſters) a Care to promote the Settlement of this Officer in the Churches every where, and to ſee to it that only Perſons of an approv'd Character were admitted thereto. *Let theſe be firſt proved; then let them uſe the Office of a Deacon, being found blameleſs*: ---- FOR *they that uſe the Office of a Deacon well, do purchaſe to themſelves a good Degree.*

He might herein alſo intend to lay matter of Encouragement before the *Churches*, to proceed to the Choice of ſuch Officers among them, where they were wanting, and to continue and honour the Office where it was already ſet up.

In a word, He might have this further View (ſeeing 'tis the natural Tendency of what he has ſaid) to offer a Motive unto ſuch as ſhould be choſen, to accept of

a Call to this Office; neither afraid of it as above them, nor shy of it as beneath them: and to continue therein with all Fidelity, andCare to use theirOffice well; without which they wou'd purchase to themselvesShame and Reproach, rather than a good Degree. These, I think, lie plainly in the Text as collateral or consequential Truths, natively falling in with the Scope of the Apostle, without any Stretch upon the Words.

But I have no Room for any Enlargement on these Things, and therefore shall now draw to a Close, with something by way of APPLICATION.

And here, ----

USE 1. I shall address my self, in a serious Exhortation, *to such as sustain the Deacons Office among us.*

Let it be your solicitous Care to *use your Office well*, acting therein with Sincerity, Faithfulness, Diligence, Constancy; and labouring to conduct all your Affairs with Prudence, according to the Wisdom that God giveth you. In so doing, you will *purchase to your selves a good Degree*; if not Preferment to a superior Station in the Church of Christ, yet a valuable Reputation and Respect; Esteem among Men, and Honour from God.

There's a particular Dignity in your Office: and your wise Deportment therein will reflect a Lustre on your selves. The blessed *Angels* delight in this honorable Employ, to minister unto the Saints that are in the Earth: Which serves to magnify your Office. ---- Let it be your Ambition to imitate those generous and noble Spirits, in being zealous of good Works, ready to do all kind & christian Offices that lie in your Power, as there may be Occasion: being Eyes to the Blind, and Feet to the Lame, and Fathers to the Poor; causing the Widows Heart to sing for Joy: so the Blessing of them that are ready to perish, will come upon you. This Angelick Temper of Soul, displaying it self in your charitable Ministration, will spread a Glory upon your Character, and make you shine in the Eyes of God, Angels, and Men. The Ear that hears of you, will bless you: and every Eye, when it sees you, will give Witness to you,

you, and be ready to think of holy *Stephen*, concerning whom it is ſaid, They looking ſtedfaſtly on him, *ſaw his Face as it had been the face of an Angel.*

Let it be a further encouraging Reflection, that the Office you are engag'd in, is what *Chriſt has ſet in his Church* : ---- not a mere human Prudential, the Creature of Eccleſiaſtical Policy, but the Reſult of Divine Wiſdom, an Inſtitution of Infinite Sovereignty, In uſing this Office well, you will *ſerve the Lord Chriſt*. He has put you into it, and you may hope for his Preſence with you in the Diſcharge of it ; whoſe *Grace is ſufficient for you*. Let a ſenſe of this fortify you againſt all Diſcouragements. *Faithful is he that hath called you, who alſo will do it*.

And let the Proſpect of that *Account* you muſt one day give up to Him, whoſe Stewards you are, make a powerful Impreſſion on your Hearts, and have a ſutable Influence into the univerſal Conduct of your Lives. Remember you are reſponſible to your Lord : and the Time is haſtning on, when He will call you to a Reckoning ; will ſummon you before him, and require an Account of your Stewardſhip. Let this be a ſtimulating Motive with you continually unto a Care of all good Fidelity ; that when your tranſitory Service on Earth is ended, you may with holy *Stephen fall aſleep* in Jeſus, and in the laſt Day hear that joyful approving Sentence pronounc'd upon you, WELL DONE, *good and faithful Servant* ; Thou *haſt been faithful over a few Things* : *I will make thee Ruler over many*. Behold, he cometh quickly, and his Reward is with Him. Be you faithful unto the Death, that when He ſhall appear, you may have Confidence, and not be aſhamed before him at his coming. Look to it you uſe your Office well ; that you may have Boldneſs in the Day of Judgment. And you will then be found to have purchaſed to your ſelves a good Degree indeed. For that glorious Lord, who is very bountiful to thoſe which ſerve him, will then aſſign you a dignify'd Station and a diſtinguiſhing Recompence. Then all your own *perſonal* Alms, whereby you have oft refreſh'd the Bowels of the Saints, and all your *official* Charities, which you have in a ſort made your own by a compaſſionate and chearful Diſpenſation, ſhall be openly applauded and rewarded

warded. It will appear then, how you have made to yourſelves friends of the Mammon of this World, and laid up in Store a good Foundation againſt the time to come.

Theſe Conſiderations ſhould excite ſuch as are call'd unto the Office of a Deacon, to engage in it with a ready Mind: and you that are in it to act therein with a holy Pleaſure and Satisfaction, to be ſtedfaſt, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord; as knowing that God is not unrighteous, to forget your Work of Faith, and Labour of Love, ſhewed to his Name, in miniſtring to the Saints. But now,

USE 2. I addreſs my ſelf to *this Church and Congregation* in a few Words.

And we beſeech you, Brethren, *Know them which labour among you* in this pious and charitable Office of *ſerving Tables.* 1 Cor. 16. 15 ---- *Ye know the Houſe of* Stephanas, *that they have addicted themſelves to the Miniſtry of the Saints; I beſeech you, Brethren, that ye ſubmit your ſelves unto ſuch;* ---- *Acknowledge ye them that are ſuch.* You owe Honour to the *Inſtitution* of Chriſt, by virtue of which they hold Office in the Church: and to them, Reſpect and Love for their Work-ſake. 'Tis a worthy Miniſtration they attend upon. They are uſeful Servants of their Generation, while they diſcharge their Office well; and deſerve a particular Eſteem among the People of God.

Will you *remember* them in your Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace! They are at their Ordination recommended to God by ſolemn Prayer: and methinks they ſhou'd not afterwards be forgotten in your Interceſſions. Sure I am, they deſire your affectionate Remembrance of them.

And let me alſo commend it to you, that a juſt *Care* be taken at all times, to enable them to anſwer the Ends of their Office, by *filling their Hands* for a Diſtribution to charitable and pious Uſes.

This Officer ſtands in the Houſe of God a conſtant *Monitor* to the Aſſembly, of their Duty to *honour the Lord with their Subſtance.* And the Church, that elect him, do hereby practically contract with him, that they will

will own him in the Execution of his Office, find him ſutable Employment in his Station, and ſupply him (as they are able) for a liberal Diſtribution to the Neceſſities of Saints. I can't but look on it a groſs Incongruity (not to ſay, a trifling Formality and Mockery of a Divine Inſtitution) to put Men, by a ſolemn Church-Vote in the Name of God, under the Character of *Deacons*, and yet not *appoint them over their proper Buſineſs*, nor take the neceſſary Methods to furniſh them for an *uſing their Office well*.--Whether a Church-Stock be of *eſſential* Conſequence in the affair of a *Deacon's* Call, and "of the vital Conſtitution of his Function", as ſome think, I ſhall not now ſtand to diſpute. However I freely ſhew my Opinion, that it's the incumbent Duty of every Church-Society to endeavour, by one wiſe Method and another, the raiſing and preſerving among them ſomething of a FUND, for charitable, pious, and evangelic Deſigns; the Relief of the Poor, the Support of the Miniſtry, and Propagation of Chriſtianity. Every one *zealous of good Works*, I think, cannot but highly approve and wiſh ſucceſs to ſuch a Propoſal.

And if the Churches did their Duty, *concerning the Collection for the Saints, every one contributing as God hath proſper'd them*; there would be a Sufficiency of Work for the Officers, that Chriſt has inſtituted to *ſerve Tables*. None methinks cou'd then with any Colour of Reaſon ſcruple the Propriety of a ſolemn Ordination of them. And as for them, how wou'd it encourage their Hearts, to ſee the Churches they reſpectively ſerve, taking a proper Care, that they may be *thoroughly furniſhed unto all good Works*, for the Houſe of their God, and for the Offices thereof! How *gladly* wou'd they receive the Gift, and take upon them the Fellowſhip of the miniſtring unto the Saints! When they ſee you with a perfect heart *offering willingly* to the Lord, as a matter of *Bounty*, and not of Covetouſneſs, their Souls will bleſs you: Yea, and the Lord your God will bleſs you; He will ſmell in the ſolemn Aſſembly the ſweet Odour of your Offerings, and will cauſe his Bleſſing to reſt in your Houſes.

Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved, *Bowels of Mercies, Kindneſs*, ---- and *Charity*, which is the bond of Perfection. Let *brotherly Love* continue and abound more and more. Be not forgetful to *entertain Strangers*. Remember them which are in *Bonds*, as bound with them, and thoſe that ſuffer *Adverſity*, as being your ſelves alſo in the Body. Remember likewiſe them which *have the Rule over you* (ſo the Apoſtle exhorts) and let him that is taught in the Word, communicate to him that teacheth, in all good things. *Be not deceived: God is not mocked* ——. Let your Converſation be *without Covetouſneſs*; for we have here no continuing City: and as you wou'd evidence your truly ſeeking one to come, ---- to *do Good*, and *to communicate* (unto all the mentioned purpoſes) *forget not*. For with ſuch Sacrifices *God is well pleaſed*: and what you lend to the Lord, *He will repay* with glorious Increaſe; very probably in this World, but moſt certainly and moſt perfectly in the next.

I conclude now with two remarkable Texts; one in the Old Teſtament, the other in the New. Mal. 3. 10. *Bring ye all the tithes into the ſtore-houſe, that there may be meat in mine Houſe, and prove me now herewith, ſaith the* LORD *of hoſts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a bleſſing, that there ſhall not be room enough to receive it.* And 2 Cor. 9. 8---12. *God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all ſufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He hath diſperſed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteouſneſs remaineth for ever. Now he that miniſtreth ſeed to the ſower, both miniſter bread for your food, and multiply your ſeed ſown, and increaſe the fruits of your righteouſneſs) Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulneſs, which cauſeth through us thanksgiving to God.*

AMEN.

The

The *CHARGE.*

AFter the proper Antecedents, a ſolemn Appeal was made to the Party Elect, *in the following words,* ——

And now, *Dear Brother,* You do willingly renew your Acceptance of the Call given you by this Church; and you do ſincerely in the preſence of God and of this Aſſembly reſign your ſelf unto the Lord, for his Work, in the *Office of a Deacon*: Promiſing by the help of Divine Grace to be a faithful Steward in his Houſe, in all Matters that concern you, relating to the Buſineſs of *ſerving Tables.* ——

To which an agreable Anſwer *being return'd; the* CHARGE *was given, with the Laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, as follows,* ——

BELOVED BROTHER,

YOU having now publickly *dedicated* your ſelf, upon the *Call* of this Church, unto the Office of a *Deacon*, We apprehend you *called* and *ſeparated* thereto by our *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and do challenge for you the *publick*

Character and Repute of a Deacon, among the People of God, as one duly *appointed over this Buſineſs*, according to Goſpel-Order.

In behalf of the *Fraternity*, we commit to you the Inſpection and Care of thoſe *Tables*, which are to be provided for among us: at the ſame time acknowledging our Obligations to *furniſh* you with what is neceſſary to that purpoſe, and reſolving every Man to diſpenſe, *as of the Ability which God giveth.*

And we do further, as *Miniſters* of Chriſt, in his Name and by his Authority, lay a ſolemn *Charge* upon you; requiring & exhorting you, before God, Angels, and Men, that you labour to perform the *Vows*, which are now upon you, and *give your ſelf* with a willing Mind to the *Work* of the Lord; ever looking to the Throne of Grace for the ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt.

Study to ſhew your ſelf *approved unto God*, and to commend your ſelf to *every Man's Conſcience* in the ſight of the Lord, by maintaining the Diſpoſitions and Deportments ſuted to your chriſtian Character and Office-Relation.

Let a ſenſe of the *Diſtinction* put upon you in the Church of Chriſt, only ſerve to promote your *Humility*, and Self-Abaſement. —— And any *Difficulties* you may be under the Ap-

Apprehenſion of, let them not diſcourage, but rather inflame your *Zeal*, and quicken your *Application*.

Make it your Solicitude to be a *faithful* and *wiſe* Steward; giving to every one their reſpective Portions in due ſeaſon, without Partiality and without Hypocriſy. *Watch* in all things, to diſcharge the Truſt repoſed in you: and let none of the *Tables* committed to your Care, be neglected. In particular let the *poor Saints* be ſeaſonably miniſtred unto, and in juſt Proportions. Be pitiful; be courteous; uſe Hoſpitality without grudging. As you ſhall receive the Gift, ſo miniſter the ſame, as a good Steward of the manifold Grace of God.

Make Conſcience thus duly to *attend* your Office: and ſtudy to *adorn* it at all times by your *good Converſation in Chriſt*; being exemplarily grave, ſober, and temperate in all things; meek, patient, and ſelf-denying; kind, generous and charitable; true & honeſt; pious and devout; *holding the Myſtery of the Faith in a pure Conſcience*, and *ruling well your own Houſe*. Let no Man deſpiſe you: but be a Pattern of good Works.

We give you *Charge* before GOD, and the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and *the Elect Angels* (who ſtand by as Witneſſes to this ſolemnity) that you obſerve theſe things; ſtudying

ſtudying in every Regard to *uſe your Office well*, and to walk worthy of your holy Vocation.

And if you thus do, know and believe it, you will *purchaſe to your ſelf a good Degree*: and when Chriſt, who once came, not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, ſhall appear the ſecond time, revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels, to be glorified in his Saints; you ſhall appear with him in Glory, and receive the unperiſhable Crown of Life, which our Lord hath promiſed to his faithful Servants.

That it may be thus, we ſhall now *commend you to the Grace of God*, for the work unto which He hath called you. ——

FINIS.

7 AP 64

ERRATA.

PAg. 8. line 32. *read*, one ——.
P. 13. l. 12. r. the confirming of his Gospel by Miracles.
P. 29. l. 28. r. wisely consider ——;
P. 33. l. 29. r. Office ——.